

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY



Computer Users' Group
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+-----+ ! Dances and Parties ! +-----+

Thanks to all of you who went to the Welcome Back Dance at the Holiday Inn. A little message to all of you who stayed away to study for your Micros exam. Serves you right! A non-scientific study has shown that studying for that exam might have improved your mark by 1 percentage point.

Anyway, a good time was had by all (I hate that cliché). Special thanks to DJs John Anderson, Chris Shore and Ben Riga who couldn't have fed an ant a mid-afternoon snack with the money we paid them.

Flushed with our great success in January, plans are already under way for a smashing year-end bash. It's going to be a dinner-dance at Bill Wong's on Decarie. There will be a chinese food and roast beef buffet. All you can eat! A long night of dancing will follow the feast with a professional DJ provided (maybe I should go into advertising). C.U.G. is teaming up with C.S.S.A. on this dance so it's going to be the only year-end bash for you computer people.

It will be held on May 3rd and the tickets are going to be disgustingly cheap. They go on sale in a month and if I were you I'd buy

quickly because they're going to sell out fast (they'd better if I want to get re-elected).

+-----+ ! Elections ! +-----+

It's that time of year again. Thoughts are starting to turn to the changing of the guard. That's right, if you want to be on next years C.U.G. executive, now is the time to act. Positions up for grabs are President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and 5 members-at-large. The elections will be held near the end of the semester and the chief returning officer (CRD in politic-speak) is John Anderson. Members of the Quebec Government are not welcome but the rest of you are. Send a letter to C.U.G. at CCUSC51 or call us at 879-7329 (TRY-SECX).

+-----+ ! Rings ! +-----+

The ECSA has asked us to pass along a little note about Computer Science rings. So here we go.

This is a little note about Computer Science rings. Silver Computer Science rings might be available this year. If you're interested, drop in to the ECSA on the 8th floor.

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|           T-shirts           |
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Computer Users' Group T-shirts are going to be available soon (if they're not already out when this issue hits the stands). The T-shirts are multi-color blue and white baseball jersey style with a neat (such a groovy word) design on the front. Quantities are extremely limited. Get yours today. Oh yeah, the price is 8 dollars.

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|       You Have It Good       |
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Find it difficult to get a terminal? Is the system slow? Turn-around poor? Take forever to get a print-out? Have trouble getting help? Well, let me tell you a story about a friend of mine at McGill.

We'll call her Sylvie. She's taking an Intro to Fortran course. First of all, she's not allowed to use time-sharing. She has to use Poliwog which is McGill's equivalent of JEF. That means she can only run her program by Batch. That's right, no time-sharing. She can't sit at a terminal, compile her program, run it and then correct her errors. She creates her program with an editor and then has to submit it to the system, log off and go pick up her output.

The other day she went to do her assignment. First she had to wait an hour for a terminal. After entering her program she submitted it to the computer, logged off and went to wait for her output. After waiting another hour she got her listing. There was a compilation error so she had to get to a terminal to fix it. This time she only had to wait 40 minutes before

getting to work. She fixed the problem, submitted it and logged off. 45 minutes later she had her output. Her program worked but she had only given it 5 seconds to run and she had run out of time. Being a first time user she didn't know what to do. So she went to the P.O.D. for help. He couldn't help her.

Next time you complain, ask yourself if you'd prefer to take three and a half hours for 2 runs.

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|           Bits and Bytes           |
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Everybody I've talked to loves the new destructive backspace feature on terminals hooked up to the micros. Hats off to the Remote Systems group ... Look for another new feature in the near future. Type control-E and you'll be able to edit the current line. It's too complicated to explain on paper but trust me, you'll like it ... Now, if only it could be arranged so that our password doesn't appear on the screen of a CRT when we log on ... The computer centre will be enhancing security in the near future. I'm not allowed to tell you what they're doing but it will prevent a recurrence of the debacle that happened last month. I know, you didn't hear about it. Well I refuse to glorify it by giving it any more publicity than absolutely necessary. Suffice to say that something bad was done and steps are finally being taken to rectify the problem. Hats off to Technical Support (closing the barn door?) ... JEF (I refuse to call it JETS) is being used more and more. People seem to be pleased ... Speaking of JEF, I heard that a professor refused to accept a JEF print-out because the assignment was supposed to be done on cards. Silly me. I

thought JEF was supposed to be a replacement for cards ... Why are there Grad students teaching Grad courses? How far are we away from: 'I will give you a high mark in my course if you will give me a high mark in yours'? ... The computer science department is in the process of choosing a new chairperson or re-electing the old one. Quick, can you name him? ... The 4th annual Small Business Computer Show will be held March 31.

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! Editorial !
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Let me tell you a couple of stories.

Back when I was a first year student (Trudeau hadn't been elected yet) there was a link to the McGill computer on the Loyola campus. It allowed Concordia students to directly use the IBM at McGill. Certain courses were taught that used this link. Well, the link was convenient but it was also expensive. So, in this time of budget cuts, the computer centre decided that this was a luxury that had to go. The link was going to be cut. A great uproar was heard from students and faculty alike.

Anyway, the next year rolled around and sure enough, the link no longer existed. Unfortunately, the courses that used the link were still being offered. I know because I was taking 2 of them. The computer science department, in its infinite wisdom, had decided that hell or high water, they were going to teach these courses and it was up to the computer centre to supply the facilities. The result was that these courses were a travesty and the students suffered. We actually had to sneak onto the McGill campus

to use their computer. If the McGill security people caught us (and they used to) we were booted off the facilities.

Here's the second story. Last semester, when turn-around was a nightmare, who took steps to relieve the problem? Not the computer science department. In fact complaints were registered about what the computer centre did.

What's the moral of my two stories? It's difficult to say. A good case can be made that the computer science department is here to teach us and the computer centre is there to provide the facilities. This is true but it's also naive. The computer science department can't just expect the computer centre to provide whatever facilities and resources that are demanded of them. Nevertheless, the department should have some say in the matter. The computer science department must have some expertise to offer as to which computer would best serve the needs of the university community. I'm not sure they have been asked lately. In fact, the two organizations barely talk to each other.

The sad fact is that it's the students who suffer. Perhaps it's time for the Comp. Sci. Dept. to step down from their ivory tower and face the realities of the real world. Perhaps it's also time for the Comp. Centre to abandon their disdain of the Comp. Sci. Dept. and ask for their advice occasionally. The two organizations should be working together to serve the students. Without us they'd all be unemployed.

Neil Gardner

Editor